



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL CABINET 6 JULY 2010

Report of the Scrutiny Management Commission

ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

SUMMARY

On 29 June 2010 the Scrutiny Management Commission received presentations on One Derby One Council and the Accommodation strategy which proposes the redevelopment of the Council House. All 51 Members were invited and a substantial number attended. The Commission's members subsequently decided to make the following four recommendations. The matter is to be considered by Council Cabinet on 6 July with ratification by Council the following evening on July 7.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission resolved to make these recommendations to Cabinet.

- 1.1 To note that significant changes were made to the architects' designs since a presentation to the Conservation Area Advisory Committee, so it is important to understand that the plans shown to the SMC have not been endorsed by CAAC. However, CAAC will have another formal opportunity to consider the final proposals as part of the planning application process.
- 1.2 The *general* aim of the scheme should be to maximise the building and its surroundings for community use.
- 1.3 The *specific* wish is to open up the river frontage, possibly including a patio linked to the planned café and available for hire, for events like weddings, which could be an income generator. However, the Council should only proceed with opening up the river frontage if that is compatible with building security.
- 1.4 Members believed the presentation need to show more details and images of the Council Chamber including size, space layout and the provision of ICT. There is a need for Members to be able to see and fully discuss the options for the Chamber.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Reasons for recommendations:

- 2.1 With regard to recommendation 1.1, the presentation on 29 June included references to the proposals being generally favourably received when an earlier presentation had been made to CAAC. Councillor Wood informed the meeting that there had been considerable revisions to the architects' plans since that time. It was therefore important to clarify that the updated designs had not been endorsed by CAAC and not to presume they would be.
- 2.2 With regard to recommendation 1.2, public and media debates about the Council's accommodation needs have further demonstrated the strong attachment citizens have with the Council House as the focus of civic life. The refurbishment offers a unique opportunity to improve the building's role as a 'civic centre', by increasing the facilities on offer and providing the public with more reasons to visit.
- 2.3 With regard to recommendation 1.3, It has often been commented by Council members and residents that more should be done with the river frontage. The refurbishment offers the opportunity to open the river facing side of the Council House. The proposals include a café that would be accessible to residents (and visitors) as well as Council staff. This in itself would encourage the general aim of increasing visits by the public to their building. Going further, the café could be located so as to offer an outside seating area, possibly akin to the patio style that premises like the QUAD and Santanda offer. Being an attractive location, out-of-hours hirings could be a potential source of income. However, the Commission fully accept that this can only be realised if it is compatible with building security, as under.
- 2.4 The security concerns articulated by Councillor Barker included, that:
 - As the direct access to and from the river gardens through the Council House car park is currently permanently locked, that must be as a security precaution. If access becomes available around the whole exterior of the building, that would pose a major security issue, particularly from the 'blind side' of the River Gardens public walkway.
 - If we develop the river frontage to accommodate functions, such as weddings, there would need to be a means of isolating the general public on the River Gardens to preserve the integrity of the wedding party and so prevent unauthorised access to the building.

Having identified these concerns, the need is therefore to now identify solutions so as to overcome them.

- 2.5 With regard to recommendation 1.4, the Commission agree that DDA compliance must be achieved. Retention of the current Council Chamber is not an option, as Building Regulations would not allow that. Although much of the presentation on 29 June showed how the floors and layout had the new Council Chamber at the centre, there were no close images shown of the proposed Chamber itself. There is a need for all Members to be able to see the detail and to fully discuss the options for the Chamber. Being able to adapt the layout so that the floor space can be used flexibly for more purposes between full Council meetings is endorsed. However, that has to be compatible with its core purpose. All 51 members therefore need to see images to gauge the overall size, the proposed space layout eg between seats and how ICT can be installed but compatible with the other uses to be made of the room.

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Background papers:
List of appendices: Appendix 1 – Implications

Appendix 1

IMPLICATIONS

1	Financial)	
2	Legal)	
3	Personnel)	All as set out in the report
4	Equalities impact)	of the Chief Executive
5	Corporate Priorities)	